1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
AW32 Gond AW32
Hill Maria
Bison Horn Maria

Bastar, and learned later from the Maratha *amil* of Deolmari that he had retired only just in time, as word had been passed from zamindar to zamindar in Bastar to combine to plunder his party. Unless there has been since then a wide displacement of population—which is quite possible in view of the chronic mismanagement of the Bhopalpatnam and Kutru zamindaris of Bastar—it is unlikely that his assailants were Abujhmar or Bison-horn Marias or Koyas; they were probably members of the gangs of ruffians at that time maintained by all the petty chieftains of the Godavari valley, or else Gonds of the type known in that part of Bastar to the Telugus as Dorla, probably Bison-horn Marias who, on descending to the Godavari valley, had come into contact with the outside world. This Maratha Amil, in congratulating Blunt on his escape from the mountains and jungles in which several of the Amil's men had been lost, added some remarks about the men of the jungle which rightly gave the wandering Banjara the credit of being the first civilizing influence in Bastar; his remarks, with the necessary modifications, are certainly true of a later period in the Abujhmar hills and the wilder parts of Central Bastar. He represented the Banjaras as having done much to conciliate and partially civilize the 'Gonds', 'for the traffic which they carry on among them, particularly in salt and sugar, had introduced a taste for luxuries, which many of them now could not easily dispense with. This had also induced them to be more industrious in collecting the produce of their jungles, such as lac, iron ore, and other articles for barter, and had necessitated their affording protection to the Brinjaries (*sic*). In the course of this traffic, which had now lasted about twenty-five years, the desire of the Goands (*sic*) for salt and sugar had considerably increased, and tended more to their civilization than any other means: for before they had tasted or acquired a relish for these articles, no man could venture among them; and he assured me that it had a more powerful effect than the whole force of the Mahratta arms in rendering them obedient to their government.'

The first Europeans actually to visit Bastar seem to have been Captain Fenwick in 1850 and Mr. Take in 1855; they made only short trips up a portion of the Kolab-Sabari river that forms for many miles the eastern boundary of Bastar. I have not seen their reports. Captain MacVicar's brief visit early in 1855 and the important visit of Colonel (then Lieut.) C. Elliot, the Deputy Commissioner of Raipur, later that year have been mentioned above in the footnote on human sacrifice. Elliot's report was reprinted in 1861 as 'Selections from the Records of the Government of India in the Foreign Department, No. XXX. Report on the Bustar and Kharonde Dependencies of the Raepore District'. He

1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
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142 individuals. The prognathous jaw is common, but far from universal; and one fairly often meets fair individuals with pointed faces tapering towards the chin. Young girls are frequently [304] graceful, light in colour, and, but for the disfigurements of tattooing, often pretty; but with age and child-bearing, long journeys to the market and heavy field work, they soon coarsen and darken. [551] Colour varies from nearly black to pale copper; but really black skins are uncommon enough to give rise to names or nicknames. The copper complexion is perhaps commoner among the Bison-horn than the Hill Marias, but the really pale copper face is more often met in the hills. Lips are full rather than thick. Eyes are almost invariably brown; I have met occasional individuals with grey or greenish-grey eyes accompanied by hair of a dirty rust colour and light complexions. The hair is black and generally straight, but many have natural waves that would do credit to European coiffeurs, and a few have naturally frizzy hair. Some young 'bloods' [302] among the Bison-horn Marias seem to have artificially curled hair. [164] The teeth are usually worn down, discoloured and neglected, and caries is common. The richer Bison-horn headmen sometimes have [304] small gold plugs, the size of a pin's head, inserted in the front of their upper front teeth.

[516] The bodies are usually well developed, and the easy, upright carriage of the Maria displays to advantage his good chest, buttocks and calves. The Hill Maria seldom if ever carries

482 **Physical powers and endurance** weights on his head, but on his left shoulder, supported by his left arm bent over the top of his burden. Actually he regards the woman as the natural carrier, as may be seen when he goes with her to the market, and almost the only time when he may be seen carrying loads is when he acts as a carrier for a touring official. It is actually recorded that at one time he used to send his women for this work; but he has long given this up, possibly through experience of the less pleasant ways of subordinate State servants. Young hill girls and women carry heavy baskets or leaf-boxes of grain, logs of wood, water-pots or other weights on their heads, generally supporting the burden with their left hands holding its upper edge above their heads. With 479 loads of grain for sale, and perhaps piles of baskets, brooms or mats, 484 the Hill Maria housewife will go once a month to the bazaar, often from thirty-five to forty miles away, in the plains, while her menfolk [462] take nothing but bow and arrow or, very occasionally, big baskets made for storing grain, which only males may make. From Kurmer, for example, on the Kutru-Antagarh border where the hill-streams begin to flow south to the Indrawati, they go thirty-nine miles to the market at Dhaurai, between Narainpur and Chhota

1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
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Dongar, sleeping the first night at Orcha, twenty-five miles from Kurmer, descending in the morning fourteen miles to Dhaurai, doing their selling and buying and eating a noon meal, and then return that afternoon to sleep again at Orcha, reaching Kurmer on the third day by noon. And their route is no easy one, but up hill and down dale along rough mountain paths. The men will carry heavy loads balanced at either end of a carrying stick borne on their shoulder, proceeding at a jog trot, for nine or ten miles over similar paths, but stop to drink and paddle at the streams, and get very exhausted if they have to carry weights much farther; on the other hand, after food and an hour's rest they are ready to walk back at once to their villages. Three Hill Marias on my last visit to the hills came to my camp at Itulnar some seventy miles across country, with letters, and met me on the march at 8 a.m. in the hills on the third morning after they had set out, having done twelve miles that morning along an exceptionally arduous mountain path. When the crops are ripe on the *penda* slopes and the men are sleeping there, the women go twice a day to them with their food, and sometimes have a heavy day's reaping as well; the *penda* may be five or six miles away from the village and high above it.

Like the Nagas of the Assam hills, the Hill Marias prefer walking over hilly country to long treks on the plains, and are excellent hill and tree climbers. All the Koitor of Bastar, in fact, are remarkably agile tree climbers, and seem to walk up trees rather than climb.

The Bison-horn Maria is even better developed physically than the Hill Maria, and has similar powers of endurance, though on the level plateau villages he does not become the adept hill climber that every Hill Maria is. He leaves less, however, to his women. He can be seen at his physical fittest when dancing for hours with tireless verve and agility, wearing on his head a heavy head-dress of bison-horns with plumes of peacock and jungle-cock feathers and strings of cowries, with a heavy cylindrical drum of hollowed tree-trunk three feet or more long slung from his shoulders, and sometimes carrying a small son frogwise on his chest. He will carry stick-loads of grain sixty or seventy miles to market in the Godavari valley, for even he makes as yet only little use of carts or beasts of burden; the Hill Maria makes none at all.

The Hill Maria wears nothing but a loin-cloth of coarse cotton in winter, summer and rains, though an occasional man may have a piece of similar cloth big enough to wrap over his shoulders at night, and a few headmen have blankets. His body, therefore, is inured to heat and to great cold; for frosts are frequent in his hills, and even as late as the end of March the thermometer may fall to 42°.

1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
AW32 Gond AW32
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Bison Horn Maria

541 Cock-fighting is the favourite pastime of the Bison-horn Marias, well-known venues being the weekly markets at Kuakonda, Paknar, Kukanar, Bastanar Ghat and near Karli, among several others. They tie iron knives to the cocks' legs. If the cocks break away, their owners pick them up and rub their hackles or spit into their beaks to get their blood up. The defeated cock always becomes the property of the victor's owner. On any market morning you can see scores of Bison-horn Marias walking to market with cocks tucked under their arms. Hill Marias do not themselves go in much for this pastime; only a few of them even stay to watch cock-fighting at Dhaurai market. Some of the Kutru Hill Marias attend cock-fighting every week at Oikal in the Ahiri zamindari of Chanda.

231 614 **Goats** Goats are seldom kept by the Hill Marias, though at Nugur in the Indrawati valley the Parlio clan, despite the fact that its totem is the goat, kept goats for the Teli tradesmen who owned the village rice bins described on page 102; but they could not eat goat flesh or even take goat milk.

Among the Bison-horn Marias, many, including even those who belong to the goat phratry and goat clans, keep goats and use goat milk; but totemistic rules prohibit members of goat clans and phratry from eating goat flesh.

231 **Cattle and buffaloes** As has been seen, the Hill Marias are not rich in cattle, do not milk them or yoke them to carts or ploughs, and generally keep Rawat herdsmen to tend them. Nearly all eat beef whenever they can afford it. Bullock or cow sacrifice is almost an essential part of funeral ceremonies, and all present eat the meat. Dead cattle are divided up and eaten; at Kutru, Hill Marias ate all that remained of a cow killed by a family of man-eating tigers, though the mangled remains had been gnawed by hyaenas and jackals, and exposed to the sun for four or five days till full of flies and maggots. The headmen of the villages of Padalibhum, Tapalibhum, Behramar, Nurbhum and Sonpur Mar *parganas* frankly admitted that they liked eating beef when they could get it; at Handawada, on the other side of the hills, the headmen of the Dantewara Mar and Mangnar *pargana* villages asserted that they never eat dead cattle, and only eat the beef of sacrificed animals. There are practically no buffaloes in the Abujhmar hills.

231 439 231 The Bison-horn Marias are great stock-raisers, both of cattle and buffaloes, and they export many head of cattle to Chanda and Raipur, as well as over the Madras border; in fact the land revenue is often paid out of the price received for cattle, and one of their favourite grievances is the cattle export duty of a rupee or two imposed by the State. They use cattle for ploughing and are

1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
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and removed. This air passage serves for the forge the same purpose as the earthen pipe *tuyère* for the smelting furnace, and the bamboo pipes of the bellows are arranged to converge at its entrance. The hole originally excavated is filled with *mahua* charcoal. 326

The smiths' only tools, which they make themselves, are the pointed and blunt ended hammer or *mutti* already mentioned, and long iron pincers with long noses, which they call *andes*. They generally have large and small hammers. The haft is inserted in a hole right through the maximum thickness of the head, at a point about a third of its length from the broad flat end; the remaining two-thirds tapers to a rough point.

3. Brass-work

The brass workers already frequently mentioned, unlike the blacksmiths, are by now practically a distinct caste. Hindus and Murias call them Ghasias, which is the name applied elsewhere in Central India, Chhota Nagpur and Orissa to one of the lowest and most degraded of the untouchable castes, whose usual occupation is grass-cutting and horse-tending, while some sections make combs for the hair or for weavers' looms. Even in Bastar, where many of them are skilled artisans, the wildest Maria holds them in profound contempt. The Maria calls them Gharwa. In outward appearance there is little difference between them and their Muria or Maria neighbours, and probably in the remote past they may have been recruited from these or other aboriginal stocks. Rohilla traders and oppressive zamindari managers in the past have often employed Ghasia duns to extract money from Marias; such is the Maria's feeling of degradation if a Ghasia comes near his house that the villagers would combine to pay a miserable rupee or two to these extortioners to get rid of their foul presence. 326 564

The Gharwas buy old brass or bronze in the markets or through Hindu middlemen. They make their brass ornaments, spoons, bells and Muria hunting horns by the *cire-perdue* process. The first or inner core of their moulds is made of earth from white-ants' hills, and known as *mati-kutan*; the earth is puddled with water and moulded to the needed shape in the hands. This is dried in the sun, and when hard covered with a coating of beeswax, on which the desired pattern is made in relief with long thin threads or small pellets of beeswax; various patterns can be produced by whipping these threads round the circumference of the *mati-kutan* core, or applying them on the sides of its plain wax covering in coils, spirals, suns, moons, lozenges, twined, or in any other pattern; and the pellets are used to produce bands of dots. The wax is warmed till it is pliant in the hands, and then forced through a tool called a 326 [439]

1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
AW32 Gond AW32
Hill Maria
Bison Horn Maria

to the Telis, send relays of young men to earn the needed cash by working at Allapilli, and it is noteworthy that these workers do not regard the wages thus earned as their individual property, but as the earnings of the village which sent them there and provided them with food for the journey. Let us hope that the economic self-sufficiency which has hitherto kept these hillmen out of the clutches of the money-lender will be preserved (which means that their *penda* must not be stopped). They are subject, however, to three pests. The first is the frequently corrupt *kamdar* of the zamindar. The second are the village watchmen or *kotwar*, generally of Mahra or kindred untouchable castes, to whose circles these hill villages are attached. These Mahras have their headquarters in plain villages, whence they make periodic tours of the hill villages to levy various illegal dues from the Hill Marias. The third pest is the itinerant cloth pedlar, usually a Mahra, who supplies cloth on credit and then tries to levy a perpetual tribute in kind. I met one of these men in this tour during my visit to the adjacent Bastar village of Nelanguri. Bazaars are so remote that these pedlars, if they could be prevented from selling on credit, and be made to charge reasonable prices, would fulfil a useful function. All these abuses could be checked by effective official touring: Mr. Kerawala's and my visits were unfortunately red-letter events in the Marias' lives.

Dancing at Kuvakodi was all in the traditional Hill Maria style, but sadly inferior to dances at such Bastar centres as Orcha or Handawada, although at least half the dancers were Bastar Marias. But even in physical type these Marias from the western fringes of the Abujhmar Mountains are inferior. Here, as I noted of Bastar during my March 1934 visit, the Maria dancer has given up the rib-dress or *gatikarhana*, the dancing-shield and the gay head-dress and skirt, though he still retains the traditional buttock-bells, the songs, the *pata-bhita* or 'song fellows' and the dance-steps.[1]

The descent back to the Lahiri camp was almost more tiring than the climb had been. Lahiri that evening was full of an eager crowd, to watch the dancing and partake of the liquor that was ready for the dancers. Here the dancing was lively and vital, but differed in various ways from Hill Maria dancing, if of Hill Maria type. The *dol* drumming was marked, even though the single-membrane *turam* drum more typical of the Hill Maria was much in evidence. Perhaps, however, the strongest impression was the astonishing wealth of 'jewellery' worn by the girls: enquiry showed that apart from strings of beads, almost all the silver and brass and aluminium necklets, armlets and other trinkets worn by the women had been purchased from metal-workers in Bastar State. There seemed here

[1] See pp. 73-6 and 183-4

1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
AW32 Gond AW32
Hill Maria
Bison Horn Maria

continue their old habit (shared by the Baigas and most of the Orissa tribes) of wiping themselves with leaves after defecation. This custom, along with beef-eating and the breeding of domestic pigs, appears to worry that slightly ludicrous figure, the pious social reformer, far more than more obvious social evils. In Orissa, for example, earnest attempts have been made to induce the Bondos, of all people, to use water after defecation. A few have begun to do so, using the village stream (sole source of water-supply) as a latrine: the only result of these rather pathetic endeavours at 'improvement' has been to make the water-supply of a few aboriginal villages as filthy as that of many 'advanced' areas. As a comment on this curious belief that a change in defecatory habits indicates an advance in culture, I note that in a famous Indian Public School, new boys are greeted with the question, 'Do you wash or wipe?' If a boy 'washes' he is regarded as coming from a definitely inferior social stratum.

Page 69, *line* 31. The multiple cord belt is not worn by Gadaba women, as Glasfurd says, nor by the Bondos, as Hutton says at page xiv of his Introduction to this book; it is a certain class of Kond women, notably the Kuttia Konds and the Konds round Nimgiri, who wear it. Gadaba women wear, not a belt, but a bustle made of many separate cords lashed together; this certainly gives them 'a strange appearance'. Juang women formerly wore belts made of a great number of little earthen cubes strung on cords. Cowrie belts are still common among the northern Murias.

Page 80, *line* 35. Cowries seem to have come back on the market again; I have seen them on sale in the bazaars and have noticed many new cowrie belts and fringes for the bison-horn head-dress. For notes on the use of the cowrie, see Grigson's communication to *Man* (Vol. XL, p. 159) on the subject, and my article, 'The Use of Cowries in Bastar State' in the same journal (Vol. XLII, pp. 121ff).

Page 81, *line* 11. Marias have told me that they distinguish two kinds of bison horn. Those of inferior quality are all-black in colour. The better type are white from the root to the middle and then dark to the tip; nowadays such horns fetch anything up to twenty rupees—sometimes a bullock is given in exchange for a fine pair. Marias go all the way from Dantewara into the Jeypore zamindari to obtain them.

Before leaving their village for a dance Maria youths often promise a fowl to Mahaprabhu, the Village Mother and the Departed saying 'Save us from hostile magic and the evil eye, and see that no feathers fall from our head-dresses. Let the drums give a good sound; let them not be broken'.

2: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1947 AW32 Gond AW32
Muria

of ghotul leaders; it is distributed when a boy or girl leaves the ghotul after marriage; it is a convenient and compendious means of paying a fine. The chelik offer it to their drums before a wedding, and drink it in honour of Lingo at the end of the Pus Kolang dance.

FIG. 13. Brass *orhi* used for ladling liquor
Length 8"-9"

This homely drink, so intimately connected with every aspect of their lives, so accessible to the forest-dwellers, so readily and cheaply prepared, may not be distilled by the Muria in Bastar or by the aboriginals anywhere. Its profits must be divided between the State and the middleman. Home-distillation is everywhere forbidden, and the privilege of the manufacture and sale of the spirit is farmed out to contractors in open auction. The business has thus passed into the hands of the most degenerate type of Hindu and Mussalman adventurer, for few aboriginals have either the means or the enterprise to compete with the sophisticated aggression of the outside world in the open market. These adventurers rob both the aboriginals and the State. They dilute the spirit; they put soda in it to cover the fact of their tampering; they make false returns; they use filthy water in unclean pots;[1] their shops are centres of the most degraded type of alien immigrant into tribal territory.

When the National Congress came into power in 1938, they declared that they would not apply their Prohibition laws to Europeans or aboriginals. It would have been more consistent had they allowed the aboriginal to distil his own liquor and had thus ceased to draw revenue from his drinking habits. The real evil of the present system is not that the aboriginal gets drunk, but that in order to get his liquor he is forced into contact with the worst type of alien and outsider.

In this respect conditions in Bastar are better than in many other parts of India. The Excise Department is efficient and understanding; the State controls the mahua trade, but allows the aboriginal great freedom in the use of toddy and salphi. But nothing can atone for the evil of depriving a primitive people of a natural right.

However, once that has been done, the arrangements in Bastar are as good as can be imagined. The spirit is cheap, only two annas a bottle,[2] and passes are freely granted to the Muria and Maria to purchase whatever is needed for ceremonial and social occasions. As a result there appears to be very little illicit distillation in either Kondagaon or Narayanpur. The figures of prosecutions for the five years, 1937-41, are these:

[1] The riddle 'Man and wife piss in the same lane', to which the answer is 'The two pipes of the still', probably hints at the dirt of the Kalar's out-still.
[2] This was in 1941.

2: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1947 AW32 Gond AW32
Muria

PERSONAL ADORNMENT AND POSSESSIONS

The Muria everywhere are at the mercy of the merchants in the bazaar, though these are not entirely indifferent to popular demand. They supply cheap aluminium armlets and anklets, glass and lac bangles, aluminium and silver neck-bands, the *kawel* necklaces of rupees known throughout Central India, and many varieties of beads. Muria chelik and motiari buy these in the bazaars and wear them. They indicate nothing except perhaps the way in which the natural taste and intelligence of the aboriginals is degraded in the interests of big business.

We may now turn to the special ornaments worn by the Muria in the different fashion areas I have named. We will begin with the Jhoria, for these are the most distinctive and interesting of all the Muria.

The Jhoria, as we have seen, are simply Hill Maria who have settled in the foothills. You can distinguish a Maria from a Jhoria girl by her breasts so charmingly displayed and the tattoo marks less charmingly marring the beauty of her face. It is not so easy to distinguish between a Jhoria chelik and a young Hill Maria boy.

Like the Hill Maria, the Jhoria give the impression of being a little over-dressed.[1] They are 'dolled up', smart, tight, fresh, alert, vivacious—altogether charming. Their clothes are worn tightly round their bodies, revealing the grace and energy of the figure. Their ornaments and especially their necklaces do not hang about them, but are drawn tight round their heads and necks. The feathers in their hair give them the perky bright appearance of young birds.

Most striking of all are their gaily coloured bead decorations. They wear head-bands, sometimes three or four of them, round the head, keeping the hair in place. Round the neck are two or more broad bead collars and a profusion of necklaces; their beautiful and elaborate designs are fully illustrated in the colour plates in this book.

Jhoria boys and girls wear ear-pendants of coloured beads (Fig. 64): some girls also wear large circular shields (*dhāi*) without the usual chains, or home-made wooden *kinwa* (Fig. 73) covered with silver paper.

Bangles are not made by the Muria, and those worn by boys or girls are the usual bazaar products.

Rings play an important part in ghotul life. A boy or girl on being appointed to high office is presented with a ring: at a marriage the bride and bridegroom give rings to their old companions: a ring is buried in front of the Gaita's house before a Deo-Dandar or Pen Kolang expedition and is later given to the leader of the dance: rings are collected at a festival and offered to the clan-god.

The rings are of brass or aluminium: some are decorated with little bells (Fig. 17). Girls often wear a great many which the boys beg them to remove before beginning the massage.

Girls often wear rows of combs in their hair, with thick bunches of cowries,[2] and balls of red and green wool. Both chelik and motiari love to put flowers in their hair or over their ears.

The Jhoria chelik wear cowrie belts just above their loin-cloths. There seems no shortage of these; they may be found everywhere. Sometimes the son of well-to-do people wears a broad silver *hardan*, bought in the bazaar, of a kind used by girls.

[1] The word is W. V. Grigson's; it exactly describes my own impression—if such a phrase can be applied to people who hardly wear any clothes at all.

[2] For the use of cowries, almost universal in Bastar, see my article 'The Use of Cowries in Bastar State', *Man*, Vol. XLII (1942), pp. 121–4.